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OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

Contribution of the Commission on Human Settlements to the special session

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In its resolution 51/181 of 16 December 1996, the General Assembly welcomed the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held at Istanbul from 3 to 14 June 1996, and its relevance to the field of sustainable development, and invited the Commission on Human Settlements to make a contribution to the special session in connection with the implementation of the Habitat Agenda[1] adopted in Istanbul.

2. The Commission, in its resolution 16/24 of 7 May 1997 (see annex I), requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to submit his report (see annex II) to the General Assembly at its special session. The Commission also requested its Chairman to submit the text of Commission resolution 16/24 to the Assembly.

Notes

[1] A/CONF.165/14, chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

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Annex I

COMMISSION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS RESOLUTION 16/24, ADOPTED ON 7 MAY 1997

Special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21

The Commission on Human Settlements,

Recalling the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), in particular, the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements and the Habitat Agenda,[1] and of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in particular, Agenda 21,[2]

Recalling General Assembly resolution 47/190 of 22 December 1992, which urged Governments and bodies of the United Nations system to ensure effective follow-up to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21,

Aware that rapid urbanization, the concentration of the urban population in large cities, the sprawl of cities into wider geographical areas and the rapid growth of megacities are among the most significant transformations of human settlements,

Noting that by the year 2005 the majority of the world's population will live in urban areas,

Emphasizing that urban areas will strongly influence the world in the twenty-first century and that urban and rural populations will be increasingly interdependent in their economic, environmental and social well-being,

Convinced that urban settlements, properly planned and managed, hold a promise for human development and for the protection of the world's natural resources through their ability to support large numbers of people while limiting their impact on the natural environment,

Concerned that many cities are witnessing harmful patterns of growth, production and consumption, land use, mobility and the degradation of their physical structure, and noting that such problems are often synonymous with soil, air, and water pollution, the waste of resources and destruction of natural resources,

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[1] Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996 (A/CONF.165/14), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[2] Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

Reaffirming that sustainable development is essential for human settlements development and gives full consideration to the needs and necessities of achieving economic growth, social development and environmental protection,

Aware that sustainable urban development requires a consideration of the carrying capacity of the entire ecosystem supporting such development, including the prevention and mitigation of adverse environmental events occurring outside urban areas,

1. Calls on the General Assembly at its special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 to take into account the message of the Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration, namely, that urgent action in cities and human settlements is necessary in order to secure sustainable human settlements and safe and healthy living conditions, especially for urban populations, recognizing the impact of urbanization on all sectors of sustainable human settlements;

2. Invites all relevant specialized agencies and related organizations of the United Nations system, and the Bretton Woods institutions, to strengthen and adjust their activities, programmes and medium-term strategies within their mandates, as appropriate, to take into account the follow-up to Habitat II, particularly at the field level. Relevant governing bodies should examine their relevant policies, programmes, budgets and activities;

3. Requests the Executive Director to promote cooperation and exchange of information between the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development in order to inform their intergovernmental machinery of their respective inputs in addressing the questions of sustainable human settlements development;

4. Requests the Executive Director to submit his report on the implementation of Agenda 21,[3] together with the comments made on it by the Commission, to the General Assembly at its special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21;

5. Requests the Chairman of the Commission on Human Settlements to submit the present resolution to the General Assembly at its special session.

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[3] HS/C/16/15 and Corr.1.

Annex II

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT) ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21*

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/190 of 22 December 1992, in which the Assembly urged Governments and bodies of the United Nations system to give effective follow-up to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, and to Commission on Human Settlements resolution 15/12 of 1 May 1995, in which the Commission requested the Executive Director, within available resources, to expand further the Centre's coordinating role in the implementation of the parts of Agenda 21 relating to human settlements and to report on the results of such coordination to the Commission at its sixteenth session. The report summarizes the activities of the Centre and its partners in the pursuit of these objectives within the context of its work programme and its ongoing responsibilities as task manager for the implementation of the human settlements component of Agenda 21.

In paragraph 13 of its resolution 51/181 of 16 December 1996, entitled "Special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21", the General Assembly welcomed the outcome of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and its relevance to sustainable development, and called for effective interaction and exchange of information on the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Commission on Human Settlements. It also invited the Commission on Human Settlements to contribute to the special session of the General Assembly in connection with the implementation of the Habitat Agenda adopted in Istanbul. In addition, by paragraph 14 of resolution 51/177 of 16 December 1996, on implementation of the outcome of Habitat II, the General Assembly recommended that, at its special session, the Assembly should give due attention to the issue of human settlements in the context of sustainable development.

Accordingly, the views and decision of the Commission on the attached report will be submitted to the special session of the General Assembly, pursuant to the provisions of the two above-mentioned resolutions of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

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* Originally issued under the symbol HS/C/16/15 and Corr.1.

INTRODUCTION

1. Rapid urbanization, the concentration of urban population in large cities, the spread of cities into wider geographical areas and the rapid growth of megacities are among the most significant transformations of our time. Urban settlements hold promise for the protection and careful use of the world's natural resources through their ability to support large numbers of people while limiting their impact on the natural environment. Human settlements should be, therefore, at the centre of concern for sustainable development, as they are for social and economic progress and, in an increasingly interdependent world, critical for the well-being of both urban and rural populations (see box 1).

I. SELECTING KEY OBJECTIVES

2. In the five years since the Earth Summit, numerous Agenda 21-related activities to advance sustainable and gender-sensitive human settlements development, decisions of the Commission on Human Settlements, of CSD and of other governing bodies of programmes and agencies of the United Nations, and the Habitat II conference and its preparatory process have led to the emergence of the following four priorities: first, shelter for all; second, improved urban management capacity; third, improved environmental infrastructure and services; and, fourth, inclusive and gender-sensitive human settlements plans and strategies, including local Agendas 21. Priorities for international support to human settlements development over the five years since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) have focused on policy advice; capacity-building; partnerships with local authorities and other major groups, including the private sector and non-governmental organizations; and networking and exchange of best practices in human settlements development and management.

3. The effort made during the five years since the Earth Summit in carrying out numerous activities to advance sustainable human settlements development is commendable. In many significant ways, the preparatory process for the Habitat II conference served to accelerate this process and acted as a catalyst for the launching of new activities as well as for furthering United Nations system-wide collaboration. The Habitat Agenda not only represents a reconfirmation of Agenda 21, it provides a holistic, operational framework for implementing the relevant decisions and recommendations of a decade of United Nations conferences.

Box 1

Multiple goals of sustainable development as applied to cities

Meeting the needs of the present ...	**...without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs**
• *Economic needs*: These include access to adequate livelihood or productive assets from which such livelihood can be gained; also minimum income or economic security when unemployed, ill, disabled or otherwise unable to secure livelihood. • *Social, cultural and health needs*: These include a shelter which is healthy, safe, affordable and secure, within a healthy neighborhood environment with provision for piped water, sanitation, drainage, transport, health care, education and child development. They also include a home, workplace and living environment protected from environmental hazards, including chemical pollution. Equally important are needs related to people's choice and control - including homes, neighborhoods which they value and where their social and cultural needs and priorities are met. Shelters and services must meet the specific needs of children, adolescents and adults responsible for child-rearing (usually women). Achieving this implies a more equitable distribution of income within and between nations. • *Political needs*: These include the freedom to participate in national and local politics and in decisions regarding the management and development of people's own homes and neighborhoods - within a broader framework which ensures respect for civil and political rights and respect for environmental legislation.	• *Sustainable use of renewable resources*: This includes cities drawing on freshwater resources at levels which can be sustained; keeping to a sustainable ecological level with regard to the land area on which producers and consumers in any city draw for agricultural crops, wood products and biomass fuels. • *Minimizing use of waste of non-renewable resources*: This includes minimizing consumption of fossil fuels in housing, commerce, industry and transport plus substituting renewable sources where feasible and reducing use and minimizing waste of scarce mineral resources (reducing use, reusing, recycling, reclaiming). There are also cultural, historical and natural assets within cities which are irreplaceable and thus non-renewable - for instance, historic districts and parks and natural landscapes which provide city inhabitants with space for play, recreation and access to nature. • *Wastes from cities keeping within the absorptive capacity of local and global sinks*: This includes the capacity of rivers to break down biodegradable wastes and methods to deal with persistent chemicals, including greenhouse gases, stratospheric ozone depleting chemicals and persistent pesticides.

Source: Mitlin, Diana and David Satterthwaite, *Cities and Sustainable Development*, the background paper to Global Forum '94, Manchester City Council, June 1994.

II. REPORTING ON AND ANALYSING SUCCESS

A. Shelter for all

4. Since UNCED, 80 countries have drafted new, or reformulated their existing housing policies in line with the recommendations of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. These new shelter strategies emphasize an enabling legislative and regulatory framework to facilitate the construction and improvement of housing by communities, the private sector and individual families. A major objective of these strategies is to accelerate the construction and improvement of housing for and by low-income groups. The focus, furthermore, has been on strategies which are environmentally sustainable, especially in regard to land-use, building technologies and materials employed, as set out in Agenda 21, and as reconfirmed in the Habitat Agenda. Emphasis is also given to the need to develop efficient land and housing markets which broaden access to security of tenure and credit, a goal which is linked, and in many ways dependent, on progress in the broader areas of economic reform. Formulation of new national shelter strategies has been assisted in a number of countries by efforts on the part of Habitat and the World Bank, most notably, in assisting over 100 countries to develop quantitative policy sensitive housing and urban indicators to help set priorities and guide the policy formulation process.

5. One of the key commitments entered into by Governments in adopting the Habitat Agenda is to work towards the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing. Efforts in this direction will, first and foremost, aim at expanding access to housing for low-income groups and will address such key issues as security of tenure. The commitment to the right to adequate housing is considered one of the key achievements of Habitat II and opens the way to further progress in shelter accessibility in the coming years.

6. In most countries that formulated such strategies, the process of implementation has begun. This will be given added impetus as nations engage broader legislation and policy reforms. The implementation of enabling shelter strategies requires support by a broad constituency, which must include local authorities and the private sector. It is hoped that grassroots initiatives encouraged by Habitat II will contribute to making such partnerships concrete.

B. Improved urban management capacity

7. The second key objective in implementing chapter 7 of Agenda 21 is management improvement and capacity-building in order to assist local authorities to face the challenge of rapid urbanization and environmental sustainability. Experience has demonstrated that a strongly participatory approach to urban management results in increased commitment of key actors and stakeholders. Increased awareness of the value of stakeholder involvement in human settlements support programmes is resulting in projects with a higher rate of successful implementation and replication. Local authority associations and

organizations have also increasingly strengthened their networking internationally, regionally and nationally, setting the basis for productive partnerships in support of improving local self-government as an essential element in capacity-building.

8. The Urban Management Programme has emerged, since UNCED, as the principal United Nations system-wide effort to improve urban management capacity in developing countries. The Urban Management Programme is the largest global multi-agency technical support programme in the field of urban development and is currently active in 55 countries with the support of 10 bilateral external support agencies. Operating through its four regional offices, the Urban Management Programme promotes coherent urban policies, the strengthening of urban management and the enhancement of municipal services in support of sustainable local development. The principal methods of work are capacity-building at both country and regional levels, facilitating dialogue on policy and programme options which draw on developing country experts, and developing mechanisms for technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC).

9. A number of new programmes have been launched in the post-Rio period. The most successful of these are multi-agency programmes such as the Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP). As a joint UNCHS (Habitat)-UNEP facility promoting participatory approaches to environment planning and management, SCP spearheads United Nations efforts in this field, and its work over the last five years has catalyzed similar initiatives by others. Working closely with the UNCHS (Habitat)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/World Bank Urban Management Programme, as well as with a large number of bilateral assistance agencies, SCP has launched demonstration projects in cities across four continents to build capacities in environmental planning and management. SCP has also played a leading role in supporting networking between cities, enhancing information flow at the local level, and encouraging the sharing of lessons of experience at the city level. In cooperation with the Urban Management Programme, SCP held three international conferences on environmental strategies for cities, culminating in the meeting on "Implementing the Urban Environment Agenda (IUEA)", which took place in Istanbul on the eve of the Habitat II conference. Cooperation among international support programmes at the global level, as demonstrated by the success of the IUEA meeting, is leading towards increased complementarity and better cooperation, as well as to further steps to institutionalize cooperation and joint programming among agencies and other interested parties working in the urban sector.

10. Another programme of global coverage with more than 1,000 cities participating worldwide, is the Healthy Cities Programme of the World Health Organization (WHO). In this Programme, cities have subscribed to the development of municipal health plans for the improvement of the human environment, better health care facilities and a variety of health promotion activities. A series of regional follow-up meetings sponsored by WHO and Habitat II have helped to strengthen and expand the Programme's national and regional networks.

11. Finally, it must also be pointed out that since UNCED, a substantial shift has taken place in the orientation of the field of management and planning in disaster-prone areas. In response to the increasing peace-keeping and peacemaking responsibilities of the United Nations since the Rio Conference, the emphasis has shifted dramatically to the management of reconstruction and rebuilding activities in war-torn societies, away from preventative planning and management capacity-building in anticipation of natural disasters. Approximately 95 per cent of the funding available to the United Nations system in this field is currently directed at addressing the aftermath of human-made disasters. Whereas this development can be seen positively, as a response on the part of the international community to unanticipated challenges, the relative neglect of efforts aimed at natural disaster prevention and mitigation over the past years could carry with it serious consequences. The work that has been done in this latter area of concern has been limited by resource constraints, although it is potentially strategic in its impact, such as the focus of the International Decade on National Disaster Reduction on disaster reduction by building a culture of prevention in its 1996 "Cities at Risk" public awareness campaign and the UNEP/UNCHS (Habitat) Strategic Action Plan for the Great Lakes Region of Africa. But it is clear that very little can be done by a few agencies with limited resources, since a broad system-wide effort is required with strong financial support.

C. Improved environmental infrastructure and services

12. The lack of infrastructure and services underlies many of the most serious health problems which are evident in all regions. Improved water, sanitation, waste management and drainage not only reduce the disease burden, but improve the quality of life in general, in particular for women and small children, who spend most of their time in the home. One of the most promising ways to improve the quality and range of infrastructure services for the urban poor is to draw on the resources and experience of the communities themselves. Over the past years national and international non-governmental organizations in many of developing country cities have demonstrated that much can be achieved even with modest resources. The successes have been achieved as a result of programmes undertaken by grassroots organizations. Most external support agencies have increased the priority which they give to working in partnership with the private sector and community groups, in order to improve urban infrastructure and services. Accordingly, much of the work of the UNICEF Basic Urban Services Programme and the UNCHS (Habitat)/Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA)-supported Community Development Programme and Settlements Infrastructure and Environment Programme has been directed at developing appropriate demonstration projects to support grassroots and non-governmental organization efforts and their effective replication.

13. Over the past five years most external support agencies have increased the priority which they give to working in partnership with the private sector and community groups in order to improve urban infrastructure and services. Significantly, an increasing share of financial commitments have been made in integrated urban development programmes that combine investments in different kinds of urban infrastructure and services. Many of these projects incorporate a capacity-building component to strengthen local authorities. Multilateral

financial institutions, in particular, have increased their lending with regard to urban pollution control (see box 2).

Box 2

Examples of project loans made in 1993 by the World Bank for the control of pollution

China: $250 million committed to the Southern Jiangsu Environmental Protection Project, that will focus on cost-effective water-pollution control investments in urban and industrial projects. It will also strengthen the institutional, regulatory and environmental management capabilities of local agencies. Southern Jiangsu region is one of China's most industrialized areas.

Mexico: $220 million committed to the Transport Air Quality Management Project for Mexico City Metropolitan Area, a government programme to reduce pollution in Mexico City, that is being supported by technical and financial assistance in developing low-emission vehicles and in the conversion or replacement of old high-use vehicles. It will also help finance the installation of vapour-recovery systems at petrol stations.

Brazil: $245 million committed to the São Paulo Water Quality and Pollution-Control Project. The goal is to implement a cost-effective approach to controlling water pollution in two of the most congested and polluted metropolitan areas of the country. This will be achieved through the creation of two urban water-basin authorities - for the Guarapiranga river near São Paulo and for the upper Iguaçu river in Curitiba - and the financing of water pollution-control investments.

Source: UNCHS (Habitat), An Urbanizing World: Global Report on Human Settlements 1996, Oxford University Press, p. 395.

14. There is a growing awareness that urban technical cooperation should focus, in the long term, on developing the capacity of national and local governments to plan, invest in and manage urban infrastructure, and on mobilizing the resources of all local actors, especially of the private sector. The challenge, however is enormous. By 1994, more than one billion people in urban and rural settlements were without suitable water supply. Even this figure, high as it is, can be misleading. The UNCHS (Habitat) Indicators Programme has collected data on the proportion of dwelling units with a water connection in the plot they occupy. This has been shown to be a more reliable indicator of coverage than water available at a "convenient distance". In terms of coverage, the drawing of city boundaries that exclude a significant proportion of the peri-urban or peripheral settlements often also means that statistics are skewed or incomplete.

15. A milestone in building global awareness on the impending urban water crisis was reached at the Beijing Water Conference in March 1996. Held in conjunction with World Water Day 1996, the conference focused unprecedented global media attention on the looming water crisis, especially in rapidly growing cities. Almost all of the world's major cities are today facing either serious shortfalls in water supply, in water quality, or both. The Beijing Water Conference has already led to a number of follow-up consultations at the international level remedial action, involving, in particular, the World Bank and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Water Resources. It also directly influenced recommendations of the Habitat II conference, which endorsed, inter alia, the Beijing Water Declaration. Urban water supply and water management have emerged as a high priority for implementing the human settlements components of Agenda 21 over the course of the next decade.

16. Developing country cities face an equally daunting challenge in the area of sanitation. Present projections for the provision of sanitation to the year 2000 show that, if not improved, more than half the world's population will be without adequate sanitation, with all the attendant health risks that this implies, especially in urban areas with large concentrations of population. The situation is further complicated by the poverty of those without access to this most basic of services. Here, as in the case of water supply and waste management, the direct relationship between poverty and environmental decay and decline in the quality of life of people in urban areas is most evident. For poverty and environmental degradation are connected in two ways. First, poverty is often a result of environmental degradation. Second, poverty is often its cause. At the same time, the urban poor have demonstrated considerable initiative in improving their immediate environment, especially through recycling initiatives, thus becoming true ecological pioneers in their respective cities and communities. This creativity must be promoted. Given the scale of needs, the most effective approach has been the one that supports city and neighborhood-based efforts which mobilize the energies of the affected population. Some United Nations programmes which take this approach include the WHO Healthy Cities Programme, the UNCHS (Habitat)/UNEP Sustainable Cities Programme, the UNICEF Basic Urban Services Programme and the UNDP Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE).

D. National and local human settlements strategies, including local Agendas 21

17. Since UNCED, and as a direct result of the Habitat II preparatory process, 138 countries have prepared detailed reports on the state of their human settlements: 127 of these contain first-step, five-year national plans of action for sustainable human settlements development prepared in line with the guidelines established by the Preparatory Committee for the Habitat II Conference. Most of these plans were prepared by broad-based national committees consisting of national government agencies and relevant ministries, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations, local authorities and the private sector. National plans of action were formulated on the basis of an assessment of shelter and human settlements situations, and locally

established priorities for action. In many countries, the preparation of these national plans of action was informed by lessons learned from best practices in improving the living environment and by housing and urban indicators, collected and analysed with the financial and technical assistance of a number of donors, including the World Bank, UNCHS (Habitat) and several bilateral external support agencies. The inclusive nature of plan preparation, the information component of these plans provided by the indicators and best practices initiatives, as well the substantial donor interest in their preparation, should help to ensure that these plans will not only benefit from broad-based political and social support, but also will be more likely to be translated into tangible policies and programmes able to elicit both local and international support and financing.

18. These national plans also demonstrate commonalities, which point the way to the emerging priorities in the shelter and human settlements area and the ways and means they have to be addressed over the coming years. Most plans stress the greater involvement of civil society and of major groups. Almost without exception, they emphasize the need to strengthen local authorities in their decision-making powers and in their managerial and financial capacities. The vast majority of them call for greater attention to access to housing by low-income groups and endorse the enabling role of the public sector. Further, what emerges from these national reports is that for developing countries, the direct linkages between environmental improvement and the reduction of poverty through the provision of basic infrastructure such as water supply, sanitation and waste management and disposal is given priority attention. Environmental issues in the urban areas of developing countries are indeed directly tied to the improvement of health and to poverty eradication. Environmental infrastructure is increasingly seen as a principal means by which to achieve these goals. The national reports of industrialized countries, on the other hand, reflect their concern with the sustainability of production and consumption cycles in human settlements and their impact on the quality of life. In all countries, without exception, resource mobilization and identification of new sources of finance for sustainable human settlements development is a prime necessity. Ensuring the financial viability of local institutions is also a top priority, for without such viable institutions, sustainable development cannot be achieved at the local level.

19. Assiduous follow-up of these priorities will certainly influence the ultimate success of local Agendas 21, which, since UNCED, have proliferated and must be considered one of the major achievements of the post-UNCED implementation process. Since 1992, increased community and local authority activism has led to over 1,800 local Agenda 21 initiatives in cities and communities around the world to improve the living environment in human settlements (see box 3). An important contribution to the accelerated pace of local Agenda 21 initiatives has been the work of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), which works closely with local authorities and their associations as well as a number of donors. One of the principal aims of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda will be to strengthen local Agenda 21 initiatives and to support their replication world-wide. The Habitat II process benefited from the community activism set in motion by local Agendas 21 and the goals of Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda are especially complementary and mutually supportive at the local level.

Box 3

Developing local Agendas 21

Hundreds of local authorities around the world are developing local Agendas 21 as the means to introduce or strengthen environmental concerns in their plans and operations. Local Agenda 21 processes differ from city to city since they reflect the different local contexts in which they are operative as well as the existing institutional structures.

Some countries have national programmes of support for such initiatives including Australia, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In the United Kingdom, such initiatives include: promoting local consultative processes on sustainable development; disseminating guidance for United Kingdom local authorities on how to move towards sustainability at a local level and on how to develop models of community consultation, participation and local consensus building; and involving other sectors and major groups in the local Agenda 21 process at a national level.

In Sweden, all local authorities have environmental strategies that include provision for waste minimization and recycling. Most municipalities have also started work on local Agendas 21. Several European countries are exploring the possibilities of linking work on local Agenda 21 to formal land-use planning systems. For instance, the city of Stockholm is currently preparing a new plan which takes a more strategic and longer term view than previous plans and will explicitly promote the integration of environmental, social and economic goals. The new plan will become part of the local Agenda 21 for the city. In Denmark, existing planning instruments are being adapted to Agenda 21 requirements so that municipal plans become overall action plans for the environment not only nationally, but also in the context of Europe.

A large number of local authorities in developing countries have also developed local Agendas 21. For instance, each of the municipalities which make up the Bogotá metropolitan area in Colombia is developing its own local environmental agenda, sponsored by the metropolitan authority, non-governmental organizations and academics. Other urban centres in Colombia, such as Manizales, also have a well-established local Agendas 21 process. Among other cities in the South that are developing local Agendas 21 are Cajamarca in Peru, Durban in South Africa and Santos in Brazil. ICLEI is expanding its collaboration with African countries in the area of local Agenda 21 initiatives.

Source: UNCHS (Habitat), An Urbanizing World: Global Report on Human Settlements 1996, Oxford University Press, pp. 407-9.

III. PROMISING CHANGES

A. Integrated Management Approaches

20. With increasing urbanization and the trend towards more urbanized societies, greater emphasis must be expected on urban settlements in the work of United Nations agencies and others. Experience over the past five years shows that this is already happening. Along with this shift, which will most likely accelerate over the coming decades, has come the recognition, from the experience of work on the ground, that sectoral priorities are mutually dependent and have to be linked conceptually and at the operational level. In fact, there is virtually not a single area of settlements development that is not dependent on coordinated, simultaneous and continuous interaction with other sectors. All this has led, in turn, to a wider appreciation of the necessary role of urban management to coordinate sectoral development activities. Inter-sectoral connectivity and integrated management approaches are critical to achieving efficiency and effectiveness and for promoting, in toto, sustainable development at the local, and ultimately, at the national and global levels. This recognition has gone hand-in-hand with the understanding, broadly shared now in the development community, that one of the most persistent obstacles to progress in sustainable development and maintaining growth is insufficient institutional and human capacity in such core fields as urban management, public administration and operations and maintenance, and not just at the local level. This explains the emphasis given today to local capacity-building by multilateral and bilateral donors, financing institutions and other external support agencies, as well as by non-governmental organizations and local authority associations over the past years. This issue is also closely tied to the broader issue of improvement of governance and management, which has increasingly become a focus of governmental efforts worldwide. Countries and cities are increasingly competing globally for investments, with the understanding that good governance is a precondition both for people-centered sustainable development and for sustainable economic growth.

B. Broad-based participatory approaches

21. Central to virtually each of the success stories referred to previously has been the involvement and increased activism of major groups, especially local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. In fact, all indications point to a future strategic role for United Nations agencies in promoting sustainable development, by concentrating on facilitating new partnerships. The global and regional exchange of new knowledge and expertise derived from local best practices, as well as new networks among major groups active in human settlements development will need to be supported. Moreover, the experience of such programmes as the Sustainable Cities Programme, the Healthy Cities Programme and the Urban Management Programme, to cite just three examples, clearly demonstrates that United Nations agencies, because of their perceived neutrality, can play a pivotal role in bringing together actors, from governmental departments to community organizations, to discuss problems, identify priorities and decide on joint actions.

22. Community involvement in decision-making and implementation at the local level normally has outcomes which have an immediate and visible effect on people's lives. Such inclusive strategies also increase the likelihood of compliance with agreed upon action, particularly if they have financial implications. In other words, people are more likely to pay for new and improved services, for cleaner water, cleaner air and for better transport, if they have been part of the decision-making process leading to such improvements.

23. Looking ahead, it seems obvious that the rate of success of plans of action and national policies will depend on the extent to which they are anchored in civil society and can generate local commitments, whether from the business community or the people. The times are over when policy and programme development, planning, financing and execution were primarily matters between government agencies and development institutions.

24. The above observations are validated by the unprecedented call and experience of the Habitat II process. In most countries, this process resulted in broad-based dialogues between the Government and civil society. These dialogues identified priority issues of common concern as well as ways and means to address them. Similarly, the active participation of local authorities and their associations in the Habitat II preparatory process has strengthened the networking of local authorities internationally and regionally, setting the basis for a new working relationship and partnership between them and the United Nations at the international and local levels, a partnership which these associations specifically requested at Istanbul. The establishment of such partnerships between the United Nations and major groups has been, all along, one of the principal goals of Agenda 21, and the significant progress achieved in them must be seen as a major accomplishment of Habitat II. In fact, it has become evident that the implementation and follow-up process of the Habitat II conference and its plan of action is being driven by the expectations of these groups of partners as well as by member States, and this also has implications for the implementation of Agenda 21 in the years ahead, and not just in the area of human settlements.

C. Increased cooperation and networking

25. As a direct consequence of recommendations of CSD and the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) in 1994, more than a dozen multilateral and bilateral assistance agencies began discussions leading to the formation of the so-called "Urban Forum", to serve as a vehicle for information exchange, and joint programming in the field of sustainable human settlements development. Other specialized urban forums, such as the Urban Environment Forum and the Urban Poverty Forum, are also associated with the Urban Forum through their networks. Taken altogether, these initiatives point the way towards more cost-effective pooling of resources among United Nations agencies in the accomplishment of shared goals. The success of the Day of Local Authorities at the third session of CSD in 1995 and the joint publication by local authorities and their organizations (ICLEI, United Towns Development Agency (UTDA) and the "G4+" associations of local authorities) with Habitat and

UNEP of the book Making Cities Work have also served to focus attention on the critical role of local authorities as custodians of the urban environment.

26. A key to future progress lies in networking among all the partners and groups of partners. Considerable recent progress has been made here. First, with the establishment of the Huairou Commission as a high-level advisory board to UNCHS (Habitat) and other United Nations agencies composed of grassroots women, non-governmental organization women, women politicians, activists, researchers and United Nations women, has been instrumental in ensuring that women's issues remain a priority in the Habitat Agenda. Major progress has also been achieved by local authorities and their associations in establishing city networks to exchange information, experience, and to promote city-to-city cooperation on specific issues. Further efforts are being made in this regard to consolidate a global network linking United Nations-sponsored networks with those of international associations of cities and those established, for example, by ICLEI in the course of its work to promote local Agenda 21 initiatives.

27. Among the most promising new and innovative tools for exchanging the lessons of operational experience and for the advancement of collective know-how for local sustainable development has been the elaboration and exchange of best practices in human settlements development and management, which was established during the Habitat II preparatory process and endorsed by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. Encouraged by Habitat, over 700 cities, communities and organizations in more than 90 countries documented best practices, which have been disseminated worldwide, and highlighted at the Conference in Istanbul. Given the positive response to this undertaking, efforts are now under way to establish a global network of capacity-building institutions actively engaged in the exchange of best practice knowledge, expertise and experience with support from the private sector and using the latest information technology to allow for easy local and global access. Parallel to this, another promising step is that over 100 countries around the world have adopted urban and housing indicators as tools to inform policy-making in the human settlements sector. This effort has been supported by UNCHS (Habitat) and the World Bank working with several bilateral organizations, generating a shared and consistent body of data on which to base future policies and programmes. Moreover, as a result of close collaboration between the CSD Secretariat and Habitat, six of the human settlements indicators adopted by the Commission on Human Settlements have also been incorporated in the CSD work programme on indicators for sustainable development (see box 4).

28. To consolidate the impact of these programmes, the Commission on Human Settlements, at its fifteenth session, requested the Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat) to establish a "global housing and urban observatory" to permit comparative international evaluation of progress in meeting the aims of the Habitat Agenda and to draw attention to and provide information on human settlements conditions worldwide. To carry out this mandate Habitat is bringing together its Indicators Programme and Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme to constitute the substantive core of the Global Urban Observatory. The objective of the Global Urban Observatory is to help Governments, local

authorities and other partners to develop their knowledge of changing human settlements conditions, both locally and globally, and their capacity to formulate and adopt appropriate policies and implement effective strategies for sustainable human settlements development.

D. International commitments

29. At the Habitat II conference, 171 countries committed themselves to sustainable human settlements development. Both the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda underscored the fundamental importance, of sustainable human settlements to sustained growth, sustainable development and to achieving the objectives of Agenda 21 in a rapidly urbanizing and globalizing world. The Habitat Agenda, therefore, represents a reconfirmation of Agenda 21 in general and its human settlements related programmes in particular. It provides a holistic, operational framework for implementing relevant decisions and recommendations of a decade of United Nations conferences. It sets out, in further detail, actions to be undertaken in four key areas: shelter; environmental sustainability of settlements focusing on basic services and infrastructure; institutional development and capacity-building; and monitoring and assessment. Furthermore, the conference was open to major groups in an unprecedented fashion, through its dialogues, forums and the series of "hearings" held by its Committee II. This process elicited the views of representatives of major groups, from local authorities to parliamentarians and professional organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, trade unions, youth groups and United Nations agencies, on the plan of action, as well as their own commitments to its implementation, thus substantially increasing prospects for successful follow-up.

30. On another level, the Habitat Agenda also provides clear and detailed expression of the local environmental agenda and priorities of developing countries, which are focused on essential services, such as, inter alia, water supply, sanitation and waste management, and are informed by the relationship between poverty and environmental decline, and thus the need for sustainable economic growth to address both. Their cross-cutting nature also clearly links the discrete and sectoral chapters of Agenda 21 to sustainable human settlements development.

IV. UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS

31. Given the physical expansion of cities and towns, concomitant population growth and the transformation in and modernization of agriculture in many developing countries, it has become increasingly self-evident that land and land management policies should not be dealt with separately at the urban and rural levels, but rather in an integrated manner. The need for such a comprehensive approach is further called for given the environmental impact of city growth - the so-called "ecological footprint" of the city, as well as the need to manage land issues, often contentious, between city and agricultural needs, including questions of land markets and land tenure, especially on the expanding urban periphery, which has become a jurisdictional "no man's land" in many cities.

The absence of a comprehensive national land policy in many countries, with jurisdiction over land policy and land management often dispersed over a number of national, regional and local bodies and agencies, was clearly identified as a major issue during the preparatory process for Habitat II. It is, quite simply, one of the principal constraints in most countries to achieving sustainable human settlement development and sustainable use of land and water resources, both for agriculture and for settlement needs. Up to now, however, only limited progress has been made towards the establishment of comprehensive national policies and appropriate institutional arrangements. Mirroring the fragmentation in matters of land at the national level, the agencies of the United Nations system active in the area of social and economic development have also, as yet, not been able to cooperate effectively in the critical area of land management although efforts to remedy this have started. The proposal of an inter-agency land management programme, which was submitted by UNCHS (Habitat) to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNDP and the World Bank, would not only rationalize current system-wide efforts, but could also become a source of comprehensive and consistent policy advice and assistance to requesting Governments, thus facilitating in a significant way progress not only in the area of human settlements, but in a number of other key chapters of Agenda 21 as well.

Box 4

Policy-sensitive indicators for sustainable human settlements development as adopted by both CSD and the Commission on Human Settlements

Indicator	Defined as...
Floor area per person	the median usable living space per person
Housing price to income ratio	the ratio of the median free-market price of a dwelling unit and the median annual household income
Travel time for work trips	the average time for travel from home to work, including waiting time
Infrastructure expenditure per capita	the ratio of total expenditure in US dollars by all levels of government (including private utilities and parastatals) on infrastructure services during the current year, and the urban population
Housing loans	the proportion of dwellings that have housing loans from the formal financial sector
Transport fuel consumption per capita	the annual number of litres per person of transport fuel consumed by surface transport

/...

32. Given the rates of urbanization in developing countries and subsequent new needs for services and infrastructure in human settlements, as well as housing (not to speak of the tremendous backlog in these areas, especially in the poorest countries), it is somewhat alarming to note that apart from increased lending on environmental infrastructure by a number of regional and international financial institutions, as well as some private and public financial entities, which together only cover a tiny fraction of needs, not much progress has been made on developing new mechanisms for sustained financing, on the scale required for building, operating and maintaining of basic services and infrastructure (see box 5).

33. Related to the above is the fact that, as cities grow, their transport problems get worse, because the number of motor vehicles and their level of use grows even faster than income, population, and investment in infrastructure and transport facilities, prompting further congestion and environmental decay. It is particularly disheartening to note that the pace of motorization has led to policy paralysis in many countries and cities, despite recognition that something has to be done. The prohibitive costs of transport infrastructure, plus the political problems to be overcome, related to more rational land-use planning and promotion of mass and non-motorized forms of transport, raise the prospects of further deterioration in the quality of life in cities.

34. During the Habitat II preparatory process, the World Bank and UNCHS (Habitat) initiated together a series of consultations on financing strategies for human settlements and shelter. These efforts now need to be pursued and put into practice. There is no doubt that much greater private sector involvement is required, as well as greater mobilization of local resources through improved service charge mechanisms and revenue collection. There are very defined limits, however, to what the urban poor themselves can contribute, in cash or in kind. An improvement in housing, infrastructure and services must go hand-in-hand with economic development policies that produce sustained and significant growth and employment. There is no doubt that there is a symbiotic relationship between infrastructure and services, on the one hand, and economic growth, on the other. This leads to the proverbial "chicken or egg" argument. Which comes first? All indications are that countries that do not have sufficient levels of urban infrastructure and services, as well as good urban management, are being sidelined by the economic changes and globalization processes under way. When cities do not work, investment does not take place, either from national or from foreign sources. And when cities fail, economies of countries tend to fail. Likewise, social exclusion and discriminatory policies and practices must be replaced by the promotion of social cohesion and human solidarity.

Box 5

Government expenditures per person on water supply, sanitation, drainage, garbage collection, roads and electricity

Income grouping, cities in:	US$ per person	Regional grouping, cities in:	US$ per person
Low-income countries	15.0	Sub-Saharan Africa	16.6
Low-middle-income countries	31.4	South Asia	15.0
Middle-income countries	40.1	East Asia	72.5
Middle-high-income countries	304.6	Latin America and the Caribbean	48.4
High-income countries	813.5	Eastern Europe, Greece, North Africa and the Middle East	86.2
		Western Europe, North America, Australia	656.0

Source: The Housing Indicators Programme Volume III; Preliminary Findings, joint programme of UNCHS (Habitat) and the World Bank, Washington, D.C., April 1993.

V. EMERGING PRIORITIES

A. Responding to national needs and priorities

35. In preparation for Habitat II, over 130 countries formulated first-step, five-year national plans of action for sustainable human settlements development. The implementation of these plans provides the operational and programmatic framework for international assistance and further provides for the focus for assistance on substantive priority areas which have been identified at the national and local level.

B. Linking the normative and analytical processes

36. The monitoring of progress in implementing the human settlements components of Agenda 21 and of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda provides an opportunity for linking policy development with the analysis of the information generated by national and local plans of action. Lessons learned from best practices in improving the living environment and the development of normative benchmarks based on urban and shelter indicators should help ensure that the implementation of plans of action will be translated into new policy reforms and strategies. These in turn should illicit both local and international support, investment and financing. This will be a major area of concentration of UNCHS and its partners in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

C. Forging new partnerships and dialogue between major groups

37. The broad-based participatory processes launched by the vast majority of countries in preparation for Habitat II provide a solid foundation for the development of strategic partnerships among major groups, notably, governments at all levels, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations and the private sector. Continued international support in strengthening and nurturing civic engagement, popular participation and partnership should provide added impetus to ongoing efforts in urban management and governance. Emphasis should be placed on networking, both among these groups, and between them and the United Nations system. The multiple benefits of the participation of major groups at this international conference will have a major impact on the implementation of the global plan of action adopted at Habitat II. These are also reflected in current efforts to involve representatives of local authorities and their associations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in the work of the Commission on Human Settlements as called for in the Habitat Agenda. Notable among these partnerships is the work of the women within the Huairou Commission, in relation to the continuous monitoring of the Habitat Agenda from a gender perspective.

D. Integrated approaches to addressing sectoral priorities

38. Since it is within human settlements that the many issues of common importance to poverty reduction and sustainable development converge, the Habitat Agenda provides a useful organizing framework for integrated and holistic approaches for the implementation of relevant goals of many of the sectoral chapters of Agenda 21. Implementation will require, however, that the United Nations system become more systematic in promoting participatory processes, more comprehensive in its approach to the processes of human settlement and urbanization and more inclusive in its activities. By using the framework provided by the Habitat Agenda and the national plans of action, implementation support will be based increasingly on cross-sectoral and cross-institutional linkages and should provide through the use of, inter alia, indicators and best practices, the means by which to assess the local impacts of social, economic and environmental dimensions of Agenda 21.

E. New paradigms for capacity-building

39. A key emerging priority will be capacity-building, particularly at the local level, to implement:

(a) National shelter strategies in order to achieve adequate shelter for all;

(b) Land management and policy reforms to achieve well functioning land markets and security of tenure;

(c) The application of economic instruments to urban development and the mobilization of domestic and international financial resources;

(d) Legal and policy frameworks in support of public-private partnerships;

(e) Policies, strategies and technologies for solid-waste management, recycling and reuse;

(f) Policies for water-demand management and the reduction of water wastage;

(g) Training and management development systems;

(h) Information systems based on spatially desegregated intra-urban data for more effective human settlements management and policy and decision-making;

(i) The institutionalization of participatory and consultative processes and the mobilization of civic engagement;

(j) The fostering of social integration and human solidarity; and

(k) Policies and systems for disaster preparedness and mitigation.

40. These priorities for capacity-building, which are compatible with priorities contained in national reports for Habitat II, should help build up the institutional and human capital needed for the implementation of the plans of action and of local Agendas 21.

F. Creating an information and communication system for the exchange of knowledge, expertise and experience

41. A major contribution of the Habitat Agenda to implementing Agenda 21 lies in the initial development of effective information and communication systems, using new information technologies wherever possible to facilitate the sharing and exchange of knowledge, expertise and experience gained at the national and local level. Networking, information exchange and communication, modern methods, should greatly facilitate the sharing and exchange of, inter alia, best practice expertise and experience, the use of policy-sensitive shelter and urban indicators, and the transfer of technology in development.